



MRS. ALICE BENEDICT

## ECUMENISM: Rx for Rushville Clinic

A dilapidated and ramshackle Rushville house of Victorian origins has become the scene of an ecumenical medical effort. With Catholic backing, an Episcopal administrator, a Lutheran pastor as chief lab technician, the Rushville Clinic draws on volunteer talent from all segments of society in the counties south of Rochester.

Alice Benedict, a registered nurse and administrator of the clinic, says, "My slogan for it is, 'Love in action.'" And in almost the same breath, she adds, "I just can't believe how wonderful people have been." Though she would never admit it herself, Mrs. Benedict is one of the principal reasons that people have been so wonderful.

The clinic opened last summer to serve the 14 migrant camps in Yates and Ontario counties, and to provide medical care at low cost to community residents who can't afford a family doctor. "The attitude of most professional people who volunteer their services," says Mrs. Benedict, "seems to be that, 'If you offer to pay me, I won't be here.'"

She loves to tell the story of how the porch on the old building was renovated. Local Lutherans tore down the original gingerbread structure, Presbyterian men came the next weekend to cart away the rubbish, and a construction company loaned two men to build the concrete forms for new steps.

The clinic got its start in 1968, when Father John Hempel of the diocesan Office of Human Development presented the idea to the Yates County Steering Committee. The Steering Committee coordinates all social programs to prevent duplication of efforts. The Rochester diocese then bought the building; now the clinic is repaying the original cost from the donations it gets.

Mrs. Benedict refuses to see herself as a director or an overseer, "telling people what to do." Instead she likes to allow people to use her as a channel for getting things done. Her method has "allowed" volunteers to get a medical laboratory, dental clinic, nutrition classes and maternity care program going in Rushville, in addition to regular medical care.

"The core of our program is the medical care," says Mrs. Benedict, "but once people get in here, they're more apt to discuss their other problems." In the busy, friendly atmosphere of the Rushville Clinic, most people would feel that way.



Mrs. Benedict discusses the evening's work with Mrs. Phillips Brooks, a volunteer nurse at the clinic.



Volunteer Kathi Streppa from Keuka College holds a baby prior to a medical examination in the clinic.